

ST. NICOLAI KIRCHE, HAMBURG.

FATAL ACCIDENT TO THE CLERK OF THE WORKS.

OUR readers are probably aware that the church of St. Nicholas, being one of the three churches either wholly or partially destroyed by the great fire of Hamburg in 1842, is now being rebuilt on a scale both of dimension and decoration, nearly equalling many of the ancient cathedrals. The work, like its ancient predecessors, proceeds slowly and gradually as funds permit, but the eastern portions have now attained nearly to the full elevation of the aisles. The work, though under the direction of an English architect, Mr. Scott, is carried out exclusively by German contractors and workmen, and has been superintended from its commencement by Mr. Mortimer, an excellent and talented English clerk of the works, who had been in Mr. Scott's employ for about twelve years, and is stated by him to have been decidedly the most efficient and trustworthy superintendent he has ever had under him. Mr. Mortimer's attention to the work in question has been as zealous and unremitting as his duties were difficult and arduous. Being a man of limited education, though of unusual natural talent, it was no easy task to be intrusted with the entire direction of contractors and workmen whose language he did not understand, yet he succeeded from the first in superintending the work as perfectly and efficiently as if it had been in his native country. When to this is added the extreme difficulty attendant on the construction of foundations at Hamburg—where excavations have to be made to a depth of 25 to 27 feet, of which the last 8 or 10 feet are below the level of the tide, and have to be pumped by steam power,—and also the elaborate nature of the architecture, and the circumstance of most of the workmen employed having never before been engaged on a work of this kind, it will be seen that his duties were very different from those ordinarily expected of a clerk of the works. Mr. Mortimer's uniform practice was to be on the ground the whole time when the men were at work (which in summer was from five in the morning till eight at night), excepting only when he had to make journeys to stone quarries or brick fields, which lie at great distances from Hamburg. But his duties did not end with the working hours of the men, for after their work was over his recommenced, and he continued preparing his working drawings often till midnight. The number of large and most elaborate working drawings he had prepared for this building alone amounted to several hundreds, showing the work with a minuteness which is not required by builders in this country, for it was one of his rules never to place the drawings received from the architect in the hands of the workmen, but to keep them as documents for his own reference, and to work them out afresh himself, both to insure his own perfect acquaintance with them, and that any error which might have crept into them might be detected before the work was commenced. When remonstrated with by his employer for giving himself this unusual amount of labour, he would say,—“Your drawings may be correct, Sir, but I do not know whether they are so till I have worked them out for myself.” It may readily be judged from this, that the same principle would apply with double force to those placed under him. Not a brick or a stone wrongly laid or worked would escape him; indeed, on one occasion the workmen, unused to such vigilant superintendence, made a formal application against it to the Government authorities, as being inconsistent with the laws of their ancient building guilds.

Mr. Mortimer, during the last few years of his life, added to his professional qualifications the unhappily less usual qualification of being an earnest religious character. He had formerly been as careless on such subjects as too many of us are; but having had a very dangerous attack of illness shortly after his going to Hamburg, during which he was very kindly attended by the excellent English chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Stirling, he was ever after a consistent Christian. It may be mentioned, as an example worthy of imitation, that though his duties, both necessary and self-imposed, were heavier and also better attended to than is common with persons in his position, and

though in summer he was usually on the works at five o'clock in the morning, he never left his lodgings without having first gone through the litany or some other part of the church service, and reading some not very scanty portion of the Bible. He said that had it not been for the support he felt from attention to religious duties, he could not hold up against the harassing nature of his labours.

It is stated in the Hamburg papers, and gathered from elsewhere, that on the morning of the 22nd ult. he entertained, from several apparently trivial circumstances, a strong presentiment of his approaching end; and when the foreman bid him “good day,” he said he feared it would not be so to him, and mentioned some circumstances which produced such an impression, and later in the day he mentioned some others which confirmed the conviction that something would happen to him on that day. However this may be, it appears that in the afternoon of that day, while examining one of the springers of the groining which was inaccurately worked, he stepped hastily down from a higher to a somewhat lower scaffolding, when the board on which he lighted snapped, and he was precipitated nearly 50 feet into the crypt of the church, and killed on the spot. The templet which fitted to the stone he is supposed to have been examining was found beside him; while the slightly inaccurate stone above clearly showed that he had not suffered his presentiments to relax his vigilance in the exercise of his duties.

The respect he had won from all who knew him caused the deepest feeling for his untimely end. The committee for the church, as a last tribute of respect and gratitude, gave him such a funeral as is usual among their most distinguished citizens. All the members of the committee attended in person, as did all the clergy of the church, the contractors, foremen, and many others, while crowds followed on foot. The workmen wished to attend en masse, but were advised not to do so on account of the jealousy of the Prussian military at any large concourse of people. The latter, however, showed their sympathy by suspending their exercises, in which they were engaged near the cemetery, while the funeral service was performed.

Above the hearse, on a pointed arched canopy was hung a silvered shield, containing the name, age, &c., of the deceased. The masonic badges (the compasses, level, &c.) and a black crown of foliage were laid upon the coffin, with the inscription, “Henry Green Mortimer, of Witham, Essex, England, born Apr. 10, 1810, died Sept. 22nd, 1849.”

The English service was read by the Rev. Mr. Stirling, the chaplain, after which a funeral oration was pronounced by the Rev. Dr. Stranch, the chief incumbent of St. Nicholas's Church, in which he spoke feelingly of the merits of the deceased, both in a professional and a Christian point of view.

About sixty of the workmen afterwards, according to the picturesque and expressive custom of the country, went to the grave, and deposited upon it a rich and costly garland of evergreens and silk, on which was the following inscription:—

“MORTIMER,

ihrem Baumeister:
die Trauernden Steinhauer
des St. Nicolai Kirchenbaues.”

“To Mortimer, their master-builder, from the sorrowing stonemasons of St. Nicholas's Church.”

We have inserted the above particulars at length, from a feeling that while such obituaries are usually accorded to persons of higher stations, it is hardly just to deny them to those who in humbler positions have evinced an amount of talent, zeal, and uncompromising devotion to their duties equally deserving of commemoration, and that the qualifications and conduct of the party thus suddenly cut off in the prime of his days, are worthy of being recorded as an example to those to whom similar duties are committed.

GALVANIZED IRON COMPANY.—According to the *Mining Journal*, this company is to be wound up. The paper mentioned attributes the failure to want of knowledge on the part of the management.

NEWS OF THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

MR. HERBERT has completed his fresco from “Lear,” in the Upper Waiting Hall, or “Hall of Poets,” as it is to be termed, the eight available panels which it affords being appropriated to the illustration of Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Shakspeare, Dryden, Pope, Byron, and Scott. That of Milton was given to Mr. Horsley, that of Chaucer to Mr. Cope, and both are finished. Mr. John Tenniel has Dryden, and is now proceeding on the wall. The artists for the remainder are not yet named, so far as we know. Mr. Tenniel's subject is the St. Cecilia, the clever original drawing for which was lithographed by the Art-Union of London: copies were distributed as prizes. The artist has altered the composition of the foreground by the introduction of a reclining child on the left hand side, and the substitution of a young knight in armour for the old man on the right hand side. Mr. Tenniel is one of the rising artists of the day; he has nothing to do to command success but think and work hard.

Of Mr. Herbert's fresco we must speak in warm terms; it is a noble work, full of power and beauty,—an evidence as well of perseverance and determination to overcome difficulties as of artistic skill. The subject was exhibited by Mr. Herbert last year, at the Royal Academy, in oil. *Lear* is on his throne (of Byzantine workmanship sparkling with mosaics and gilding), the elder sisters are on their knees, to the left, and *Cordelia*, having refused to “heave her heart into her mouth,” stands meekly on the right. The exact words illustrated we will take to be *Lear's* expression—

“So young and so untender?”

Cordelia. So young, my lord, and true.

Lear. Let it be so—Thy truth, then, be thy dower!

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity, and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever

The sway,
Revenue, execution of the rest
Beloved sons, be yours; which to confirm,
This coronet part between you.”

The countenance of *Cordelia* is one of singular sweetness.

The artist resolved, on commencing the work, that the whole of the picture should be positively in fresco,—i. e., not made out or rectified in tempera; and to effect this the whole picture has been executed three times over, part after part being cut out and replastered, and cut out again before a result could be obtained satisfactory to the artist. We may add that the picture is lighted from a window at the side high up, and that the shadows are arranged to suit this.

In completing the decoration of the ceiling and walls of the hall, it will be necessary to have reference to the frescoes, or their effect may be considerably interfered with.

Looking in at the House of Lords, we saw Mr. Maclise hard at work, perched up in the far distant recess, wherein he has nearly finished the Spirit of Chivalry. The House of Commons is so near to completion, that if it were desired, it might be made ready in time for the coming session. The whole of the woodwork here, panelled ceiling, galleries, wall panellings, are of polished oak, without colour or gilding, contrasting strikingly with the profuse decoration of the House of Lords. The Commons' lobby and libraries are also very nearly ready for use.

Some time since we took occasion to mention that the piles which formed the coffer-dam in front of the terrace were being drawn, and we pointed out the impolicy of the proceeding and the danger which attended it. We are glad, therefore, to find that this course has been abandoned, and that the piles are now being cut off close to the surface of the ground, so as not to disturb the bottom.

The question between Mr. Barry and the Government is still open, but we understand there is every willingness on the part of the latter to meet it liberally.